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SUBJECT: GEORGIA WELCOMES NATO SUMMIT COMMUNIQUE

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. The Georgian press gave positive media coverage to the NATO Summit, focusing in particular on the detailed and lengthy portions of the communique that dealt with Georgia and its relationship with NATO. In numerous conversations, senior Georgian officials have reached out to inform us of their appreciation for such strong Summit statement on NATO's support of and relationship with Georgia. Defense Minister Sikharulidze, First Deputy Minister for Euro-Atlantic and NATO Integration Helen Khostaria and First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Giga Bokeria all said that they were pleased with the final language of the communique. Khostaria and Bokeria both felt strongly that the communique well-represented Georgia's interests and, while recognizing areas where the government needed to continue to reform, welcomed eventual NATO membership. They noted that the communique language went much further than anyone had expected, especially with regards to the disputed territories. In the press, Deputy Prime Minister Gia Baramidze praised the NATO Summit as successful noting that the communique reaffirmed that Ukraine and Georgia will become members of NATO, and highlighted a deepening relationship between the Alliance and Georgia. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Khostaria, one of the primary drafters of Georgia's Annual National Plan (ANP), said that initially the government did not expect much of a mention in the communique, and would have been happy if the message did not backtrack from Bucharest. She said she was quite pleased with the final language and that it went much further than anyone expected. The Government was especially appreciative of the constructive language on the disputed territories that recognized Georgian territorial integrity. Khostaria welcomed NATO's message to Russia that it must uphold its commitments under the Sarkozy plan. She believed the communique correctly stressed the need for engagement between the alliance and Russia, while acknowledging that relations had been impacted by the events of 2008. Khostaria said she is looking forward to discussing the ANP further in Brussels, likely in mid-April, and receiving the Allies' feedback. She stressed that Georgia sees the ANP as an important document to guide reforms, as well as a path forward toward NATO integration.

¶3. (C) In a separate conversation with the Ambassador, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Giga Bokeria expressed Georgia's pleasure with the Summit Communique. He said that Foreign Minister Vashadze also was extremely pleased and that the language went even further than they had hoped. Bokeria noted his surprise that "the Germans" had allowed the inclusion of the Georgia language.

¶4. (U) In remarks to the press, Vice Prime Minister Baramidze said that Georgia would base its future actions with NATO on the communique language. He said that the statement gives Georgia more hope that, despite many difficulties, Georgia will overcome all obstacles and will certainly join NATO. He added that Georgian relations with NATO have moved from the cooperation stage to pre-integration. He also noted that the hope the ANP would

be approved by the end of April.

15. (C) Comment: The summit communique has rejuvenated Georgian hope for NATO following a period in which many Georgians believed Georgia's interests had been subsumed by geopolitical realities of European allies. The fact the NATO as a whole made such a strong statement toward Russia is encouraging to the Georgians. The Georgian press and our Qencouraging to the Georgians. The Georgian press and our contacts also see the U.S. administration as having played a key role in the communique language, and welcome the sign of continuing strong USG support for Georgia.  
TEFFT